

## A New Species of *Anthaxia* (*Agrilaxia*) Kerremans from Natal (Coleoptera, Buprestidae).

by

C. L. BELLAMY

Department of Entomology University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002, South Africa

The first Afrotropical species of *Anthaxia* belonging to the New World subgenus (*Agrilaxia*) is described from northern Natal and illustrated.

### INTRODUCTION

The genus *Anthaxia* Eschscholtz is one of the largest and most widely distributed genera of the Buprestidae. Obenberger (1930) records 443 species included in *Anthaxia*, *Agrilaxia* Kerremans and *Cylindrophora* Solier, with the latter two currently considered as subgenera. Species of *Anthaxia* are recorded from all the major faunal areas of the world with the exception of the Australasian region. Until recently, the subgeneric classification of *Anthaxia* was chaotic, mainly because of the work of Rikhter (1945, 1949), who split the Palaearctic fauna into three separate genera and 13 subgenera. I recently (Bellamy 1985) listed the genus as being comprised of 18 subgenera and although Bílý (1982) expressed the opinion that there should be only seven valid subgenera, he failed to indicate the synonymy of Rikhter's taxa. Nelson (1985) has partially rectified this situation with the synonymy of nine of Rikhter's taxa under the subgenera of *Anthaxia* and *Haplanthaxia*.

With the description of the first Old World species of the subgenus *Agrilaxia* herein, the Afrotropical species of *Anthaxia* can be divided into four subgenera: *A. (Anthaxia)*, *A. (Cratomerus)* Solier, *A. (Haplanthaxia)* Reitter and *A. (Agrilaxia)* Kerremans. The Afrotropical species show a strong affinity to the Palaearctic fauna, although the discovery of the subgenus *A. (Agrilaxia)* in Natal also suggests an ancient relationship with the Neotropical fauna. The Neotropical species of *Anthaxia* are classified in three subgenera, *A. (Agrilaxia)*, *A. (Cylindrophora)* and *A. (Paracuris)* Obenberger, which are unique to that faunal region, except for a couple of species of *A. (Agrilaxia)* extending north into the Nearctic region. The affinities of the Holarctic species, based upon their subgeneric placement, along with the relationship between the Palaearctic and Afrotropical species, would seem to indicate an ancient divergence for the precursors of the contemporary Neotropical fauna. But with the circle being completed by the apparent relictual connection between the southern Afrotropical and Neotropical faunas established herein, no clear explanation of relationship and subgeneric phylogeny is available at this time.

***Anthaxia (Agrilaxia) natalensis* sp. nov.**, Figs 1-4

Holotype female, size small,  $5.5 \times 1.4$  mm (maximum length vs. width); elongate; flattened above; surface black with blue green reflection on dorsal portion of distal antennal segments, along anterior margin of pronotum, basal margin of elytra, scutellum, epipleural lobes, more generally on disc of thoracic sternites and dorsal portion of tarsi.

Head with eyes large, convex, slightly projecting beyond outline of head; vertex and frons slightly, longitudinally depressed; clypeus and frons separated by transverse depression dorsad to antennal foveae; clypeus broadly triangularly emarginate; anteclypeus very slightly exposed; labrum blue green, except for small triangular testaceous distal portion, sparsely covered with testaceous setae; maxillary palpi with distal segment elongate, distally rounded, longer than preceding two segments together; antennae (Fig. 2) with segment 1 geniculate, slender basally, swollen distally, more than  $2 \times$  length of 2; 2 globose, width subequal to length; 3 shorter than 2, subserrate; 4-10 serrate, with lateral lobe rounded; 4 with width subequal to length; 5-10 with length subequal to width; 11 oblong with narrow apical notch (Fig. 2); surface sculpture areolate with polygonal cells finely rugose, each with one very small smooth callosity (Fig. 3).

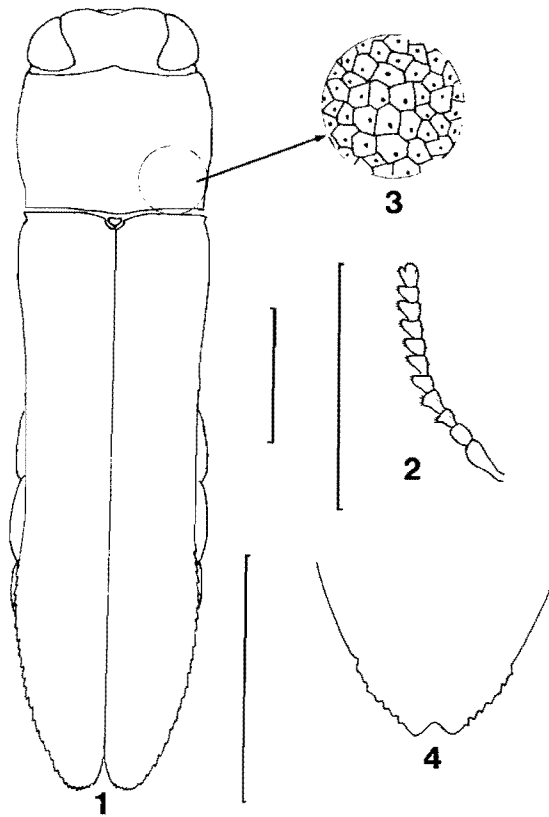
Pronotum.  $1.35 \times$  wide as long, widest past middle; anterior margin biarcuate, medially lobate; basal margin laterally biarcuate, medially truncate, entire length finely dentate; lateral margins arcuate, slightly constricted at laterobasal angles, carinate to before basal  $1/2$ ; disc somewhat flattened, one large shallow laterobasal depression on either side; sculpture as on head. *Scutellum* cordiform, surface shallowly coarsely punctate.

Elytra.  $3.5 \times$  long as wide, slightly narrower than pronotum, widest opposite well developed oblique humeri; basal margin slightly constricted before humeri; one narrow transverse depression between humerus and scutellum on either side; lateral margin narrowing past humeri, feebly concave exposing dorsolateral aspect of basal abdominal sternites, widening at apical  $1/2$ , then gradually narrowing to separately rounded apices; margin serrate from past apical  $1/2$ , dentate on apices; epipleural lobe narrow, entire to external side of apices; disc flattened; lateroapical margin explanate dorsad to epipleural lobe; surface coarsely rugose, with irregular coarse punctures, microsculpture very finely rugose.

Ventral surface with apical margin of prosternum carinate, very feebly concave; prosternal process with acute lateral lobes, apical lobe roundly acuminate; margin of last visible abdominal sternite serrulate to emarginate apex (Fig. 4); surface sculpture as on head and pronotum, with polygonal cells more coarse on thoracic sternites; abdominal sternites with sparse recurved testaceous setae.

**MATERIAL EXAMINED.** Holotype ♀ (Transvaal Museum). SOUTH AFRICA: NATAL, Ndumu Game Reserve, S26.51-55, E32.12-20, 5-8.xi.1984, 50-100 m, C. L. Bellamy, H. & A. Howden, R. G. Oberprieler, C. H. Scholtz.

The specific epithet is the adjectival form of the provincial locality name. Unfortunately, this exciting new species is described from a unique specimen, but being subgenerically distinct from all other Afrotropical *Anthaxia*, I felt the description was warranted at this time. Cobos (1971) revised the subgenus *Agrilaxia* and recognized 75 species, all from the New World and with a majority from Brazil and Argentina. *A. (A.) natalensis* keys to *A. (A.) freyi* Cobos but differs in many respects, especially the pro-



Figs 1-4. *Anthaxia (Agrilaxia) natalensis* **sp. nov.**; 1, dorsal habitus; 2, antenna, dorsal view; 3, closeup of areolate surface sculpture; 4, margin of abdominal sternite; 5, ventral view (scale bars = 1 mm, with 3 = 2 × that of 1).

portions of the pronotum and elytra, sculpture and colouration and quite obviously by the very disjunct distributions.

It has only been recently that several specific connections between the Afro-tropical and Neotropical buprestid faunas have come to light. Previously, the only overlaps were in the very large, cosmopolitan genera *Agrilus* Curtis and *Chrysobothris* Eschscholtz. Otherwise, the demarcation between the New and Old World faunas is well marked with most connections between the Palaearctic and Nearctic regions. A new genus in the Nothomorphini (Acmaeoderinae) was described by E. Holm (1986) links the genera *Nothomorpha* Thomson from southwestern Africa and *Acmaeoderoides* Van Dyke from southwestern North America. In addition, I have an undescribed species of *Taphrocerus* Solier (Brachyini, Trachyinae) from Royal Natal National Park; this is an otherwise New World genus.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Erik Holm for his support in my various projects and for reading the manuscript and to Clarke Scholtz for inviting me along on the collecting trip that produced this interesting taxon.

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Accepted 10 February 1986